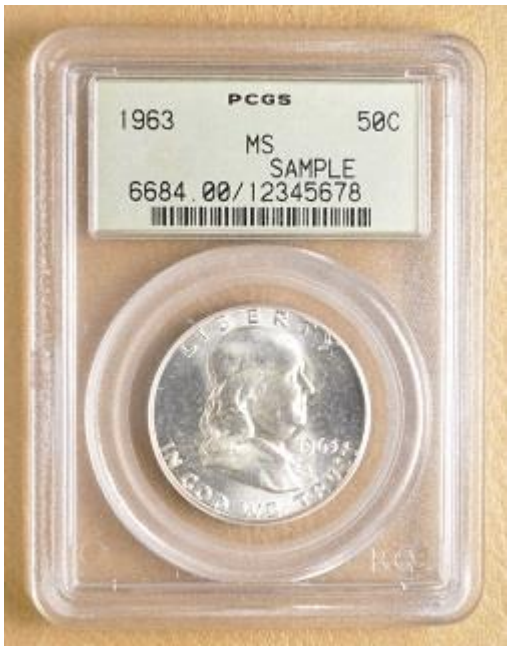
Sample Slab Update #25 – April 2018

The newsletter for sample slab collectors

Market Notes



Two new examples of a PCGS rarity, the green label Franklin, sold on eBay for strong prices. PCGS-050-3-1 was previously known from a single example and valued in Sample Slabs at a conservative $500. Another example, which may be a new variety because it uses an accurate coin number of 6684 instead of the generic 654321 and grade of MS instead of CIRCULATED, appeared in a no-reserve auction ending March 22. The holder received massive attention from sample collectors, and closed at $1,009, making it the second most costly sample slab ever sold, surpassed only by the Regency sample. This record did not last long, as the seller had a second example that they sold as a Buy It Now for $1,250 on March 27. Top quality PCGS material always does well.

Volume remained high since the last newsletter. March, for example, had a healthy 175 eBay sales. Now that most collectors and dealers are aware of sample slabs, more material comes out of drawers and boxes and onto the market. As an illustration, seller unisource_numismatics brought a 60-70 piece collection to market in April. This included four of the blank green label PCGS Memorial cent (PCGS-001-3-1), that earned around $150 each. The green label Franklins were also a part of this sale. Overseas sellers schnapper_karl (Germany) and hernest_shackleton (Japan) additionally brought sizeable collections to market.

There were plenty of other noteworthy sales, including:

- Oversized NGC luncheon slab with all five 2004 quarters at $191.38
- NGC gold-back with a 1960-D dime for $256.21
- Avidly sought PCGS Liberty nickel for $203.50
- A SEGS Sacagawea dollar labeled COURTESY OF / NATIONAL SILVER DOLLAR / ROUNDTABLE & SEGS earned $78, setting a record for this service.
- Luncheon slabs were down overall due to oversupply. A 1/8/10 example with a 2009-D Formative Years cent bucked the trend, however, and auctioned for $171.38. Also, two of the Barber quarter luncheon slabs from 8/8/14 earned $212.50 and $142.50.

- As predicted, the Rare Coin Market Review holders from the 2017 Denver ANA held their value. Two full sets sold for $102.50 and $174.99.

Third Annual Sample Collectors Meeting at the Philadelphia ANA – August 2018

For the third year in a row, sample collectors will meet at the annual ANA World's Fair of Money. Nothing formal – only a few enthusiasts talking about their mutual interest. What is your opinion on how to arrange the 2018 event? Should we:

1. Meet at a convention center lobby, hotel bar, or other similar location after the bourse closes (good for people working the convention, free, and no time limit, but promotion will be only through this mailing list and I will need to find a space when I get to Philadelphia), or
2. File paperwork with the ANA to form a club and obtain a meeting room at the convention center during the day (meeting will be in the convention program and have a dedicated space arranged in advance, but some fees involved, and convention workers will have difficulty attending).

Let me know at davidschwager@hotmail.com

FASTCOIN Facts

You have probably seen PCGS promotional slabs with FASTCOIN.com on the reverse. Holding a variety of mint state and proof United States coins, these were issued by California coin dealer Joel Rettew, Senior. Learn more about him at pcgs.com/experts.

In case it is of interest to sample collectors, I put together this fact sheet on FASTCOIN eBay sales. This article includes no opinions or advice – only information on FASTCOIN holders. As with anything I tell you, remember that the information is accurate as far as I know, but always has some gaps or errors. For example, I chose not to include some FASTCOIN group lots.

FASTCOIN Fact Sheet

- First sale: 10/30/14
- Last sale: Ongoing (numbers are as of 4/22/18)
- Number of sales: 131
- Total value: $5,972.56
- Mean value
    - 2014: $64.45 (17 sales)
    - 2015: $39.93 (22 sales)
    - 2016: $76.78 (18 sales)
    - 2017: $43.86 (41 sales)
    - 2018: $24.79 (33 sales through 4/21/18)
    - Overall: $45.59 (131 sales)
- Median value (all years): $35.00
- Highest value: $250.00 (The first FASTCOIN eBay sale, a 1921 Morgan, sold 10/30/14)
- Lowest value: $5.50 (Tie – 1970-S nickel sold 11/10/14 and 1970 cent sold 2/1/18)
- Coin types:
    - Cent: 47 (29 Wheat, 18 Memorial)
    - Nickel: 9 (all Jefferson)
    - Dime: 10 (4 Mercury, 6 Roosevelt)
    - Quarter: 22 (all Washington eagle-back)
    - Half: 18 (4 Walking Liberty, 11 Franklin, 3 Kennedy)
    - Dollar: 23 (18 Morgan, 5 Peace)
    - Medal: 2 (FASTCOIN store card)

See here for an Excel spreadsheet with a list of FASTCOIN eBay sales.

Book News

About 15 copies of the Sample Slabs, second edition book remain. Although I intend to sell all of them, I intentionally slowed down sales because I don't want to sell out completely. Buy it for $29 with shipping ($12 for the PDF download) at SampleSlabBook.com or eBay.

This may never happen, but someone needs to write the history of coin certification soon. Many of the people who founded the first certifier, ANACS, in 1972 are already gone. By the time I retire in the 2030s and can devote myself full time to numismatics, the certification pioneers of the 1980s may no longer be with us, either. A history book would sell few copies – it's easier to interest people in a price guide. Still, certification has changed our hobby so much in the last 30+ years that this is a story that needs to be told. One possibility is a series of articles on the early years of each certifier that could later be assembled into a book.

Is anyone working on a history of certification? Or does a partial work already exist, such as a company history at one of the major certifiers?

Slipped Through My Fingers – A Sample Slab Story

For years, I have been looking for a sample slab issued by Certified Guaranty Company (CGC). Part of Certified Collectibles Group, which also operates the NGC and PMG brands, GCG is the largest and most-respected certifier of comic books. I saw a single picture of a GCG holder labeled "sample," but inquiries online and with comic dealers had not resulted in other examples, either for sale or not. CGC samples are rare.

In March, I took my daughter to the giant WonderCon pop culture convention in Anaheim and took the opportunity to wait in line at the CGC booth in hopes of learning more. Encouragingly, there were sample holders standing on the counter – the first I had seen in person. When I explained that I wrote a book on grading service samples and threw in some industry jargon, the customer service representative kindly gave me one. I clutched it gratefully and kept it in my backpack for the rest of the day.

As we were getting into the car to leave the convention, however, I dropped my pack, landing hard on the pavement. I took out the slab to find a sickening 10-inch crack extending up both sides from the corner. Seeing my face, my daughter put her hand on my shoulder and said, "It's OK, Dad."

I can't say, however, that I'm disappointed. I succeeded in scoring a rare holder and am still better off today than I was before the convention.

Buying and Selling

Buying

I always buy sample collections or better single slabs for inventory. For my own collection, I look for samples from obscure or unlisted grading services, gold coin samples, and rarities from all services. davidschwager@hotmail.com

Selling

Sample Slab Update Sale #6, with over $1,300 worth of holders, goes live at the same time as this newsletter. If you did not receive the list yet, download the spreadsheet here.

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